

I am aware that there is great risk in describing piece meal, and I dare say I have not escaped making some blunders; but the promoters wished that it should be something more than a mere catalogue, and the labour is less monotonous to me.

All the more important groups are included and also references to (unpublished) publication of species, plates, etc.

In fact I include everything that I think will be useful to me in writing a sketch of the history of botanical discoveries and an essay on the distribution of the plants found in the countries under consideration when I have finished the enumeration. With regard to the unnamed specimens included, there is

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Dear Sir,

Although personally unknown to you, I take the liberty to address you on a subject in which I feel sure you have a great interest. A few days

ago I forwarded a copy of my Diagnoses Plantarum etc., and will now explain the scope of the work mentioned therein, namely, Biologia Centrali-Americanus, or at least of the botany.

It may be known to you that Messrs Godman and Salvin, aided by various specialists have for many years been engaged in working up the zoology of Central America and Mexico. About three years ago it occurred to them that it would add considerably to the interest of their work if the botany could be so far elaborated as to determine the general laws & the distribution of plants for comparison with those obtained for animals.

After some consultation it was decided to make the herbarium the basis of an enumeration of all the plants hitherto found in the countries lying between Darien and the territories of U.S. of N. Am. I need not tell you how suitable hb. Kew. is for the purpose.

To what is herein contained will be added all the plants published, but not represented at Kew by named specimens, as well as most of the novelties in the collections made by the French Scientific Commission. Both the named and un-named species in hb. Kew. are included for the sake of the localities etc. Localities, altitudes, collectors' names, etc. will be quoted, and, although it was impossible to undertake a critical examination of all the species a considerable number will be described, and many of them figured from drawings of Fitch and coloured drawings done on the spot by Mr. Salvin. I will send you a specimen of an uncoloured plate. There are thirty plates of Polypetale, and all the "copy" is ready for the printer and I am half through the Spnopetale.

no doubt that in many instances a very large proportion of them belong to described species, the number of undetermined species being great, but they are much numerous in some of the early polypetalous families. Under each order is given the number (approximate) of genera and species and their general distribution; under each genus the number and habit, & whether shrubby or arborescent, of ~~each~~ the species; and under each species, as near as can be without critical comparison, its distribution. I think the foregoing will give you an idea of the plan and scope of my work, which imperfect as it must be will be serviceable to botanists.

who undertake the work & from
labour of critics describing
the species.

If you have any suggestion
to offer, they would be accepted
with great pleasure, and to
possible carried into effect.

Perhaps like a German aspirant
for the dignity of Ph. D., I ought
to say something respecting my
antecedents. To be brief,
I was assistant in the
herbarium here from 1860
to 1867, when I was obliged to
resign on account of bad
health. For several years
I could do nothing, but health
and strength returning, I
came back to Kew in
1873, this with the exception
of this interesting job, and a
little work on the colonial
floras, I am obliged to leave
botany alone, because it does
not pay, and write for the
horticultural papers.

D. A. Gray

Yours faithfully
W. B. Hemsley